



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY

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IMMIGRATION: Facts and Fantasies

LWVUS Position on Immigration – April 1, 2008

The League of Women voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the U.S. on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics and meeting other relevant criteria....the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.¹

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¹ From LWVUS website on 29 Dec 2008.

² Suoro, Robert. Hispanic Immigration & the Future of Annapolis. *Envisioning Annapolis*. 22 Jan 2008.

Demographics

Fact. The *legal* channel for immigration is *inflexible*. The illegal channel for immigration is *very flexible*. This 2-channel reality has become the U.S. defacto immigration policy. Ambivalence prevails politically about federal solutions. State and local governments have become the last hope to solve the two-channel problem. This is the first time since the 1870s that the federal government has failed to control immigration.

Persistent focus on immigration issues is really a concern about one-third of all foreign-born residents of the US. In 2004, there were 35.7 million foreign-born in the US. There are seven official classifications of *immigrants*.⁴ *Immigrant* is a *legal* term to describe a person who has been legally admitted to the US in other-than-temporary status; over 60% of foreign-born are legal immigrants.⁵ The on-going debate, and our own study of the Impact of Immigration on AAC, focuses primarily on those of Hispanic/Latino origin who represent the vast majority of recent immigrants.

United States.

Of all children 5 years old or younger living in the U.S., 45% are non-white.

In 2000, 70% of those over 4 years old who spoke English less than well spoke Spanish.

Hispanics became the country's largest minority in 2001. Each year they account for 50% of the national population growth.

Maryland.

Maryland residents of Hispanic/Latino origin constitute 6.3% (353,956) of the state's population of 5.6 million.⁶ The Pew Hispanic Center estimated that in 2005 MD had between 225,000 and 275,000 unauthorized Hispanic migrants, or over 39% of all foreign born MD residents.

Anne Arundel County.

According to the *Census Community Survey. 2006-08*, Hispanic/Latino residents constituted 4.2% (21,522) of AACs population of 512,429. From 1990-2000, the Hispanic population in AAC grew by 77% to roughly 12,100 residents AAC's foreign-born population grew 32% from 2000-2006-- from 23,211 to 30,748. Of all foreign-born, an estimated 6% of the workforce are in Maryland illegally. It was estimated in 2008 that there were around 20,000 school-age Hispanics in AAC.

In spring of 2008, The Center for Study of Local Issues at AA Community College polled county voters about immigration. The vast majority (76%) felt that "immigrants strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents." But more than 80% want immigrants to be LEGAL.

Many major cities have sanctuary policies: New York, Detroit, Washington, New Haven, San Francisco. In AAC, Executive Director Leopold has taken a strong stand against sanctuary and FOR law enforcement, putting in place policies which use local government resources to "crack down on illegal immigration."

Annapolis.

According to the *Census Community Survey. 2006-08*, Hispanic/Latino residents constitute 11.6% (3,965) of Annapolis' population of 34,181. Labor force demand has been driving the rate of immigration in Annapolis. Concentrations of Hispanics/Latinos are around Hilltop Ave. in Admiral Apts., in Fairwinds, and off Forest Dr. in Allen Apts. [95% Hispanic]. Also clusters of 2 or 3 families in homes are near BayWoods, Londontown in Edgewater, and north county near Pasadena. Undocumented residents are not eligible to live in public housing.

³ Suoro, Robert. Hispanic Immigration & the Future of Annapolis. *Envisioning Annapolis* series. 22 Jan 08.

⁴ Source: PEW Hispanic Center, J. Passel.

⁵ Glossary prepared by Pat Hatch, *LWVUS Immigration Study Committee*, May 2007.

⁶ U.S. Census, 2007.

HISPANIC CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

This material is based on published sources and statements from individuals in Anne Arundel County who provide services to recent Hispanic immigrants.

The Hispanic immigrant population is not monolithic. The newcomers come from various countries primarily in Central America, with Mexico being the native country of most. Spanish is the common language, but customs and attitudes can vary depending upon the country of origin. New residents from Cuba are particularly different from those of other countries.

A typical Hispanic immigrant is a member of the Catholic Church, though some newcomers are members of the more fundamentalist Protestant denominations. He or she comes from a male dominated society, subscribes to the importance of the family unit, and respects authority and power. The implications are suggested in the following paragraphs.

While society in the United States now recognizes the right of women to full equality, many immigrants do not subscribe to this ideal. A significant number of immigrant women dropped out of English classes because the husband or boy friend did not want them to speak better English than they did, according to the Department of Social Services. Spousal abuse may not be reported because the act may not be unacceptable in the home society. Young women may often submit to the sexual advances of men as a result of respect for male figures.

The cohesion of the family unit of is much greater significance than in the larger society. Conflicts which usually occur in relationships between parents and teen in the dominant culture do not occur in first generation immigrants. Another difference is that parents are far more likely to stay together and provide a stable home for children than in the wider society. Immigrant families often remit money to relatives in the home county to aid the life of those left behind.

The idea of loyalty carries over to the Hispanic community as well. This means the continuing use of the Spanish language, listening to Spanish music, watching Spanish TV programs, and eating traditional foods. Often, family members work for the same employer in order to be close to each other. Young men may withdraw from school to help support the family.

Another significant attitude of many Hispanic immigrants is the respect for power and authority. Where many U.S. citizens question authority and feel empowered to support ideas in which they believe, many new Hispanic residents respect the persons who may have offices of authority. This applies to government officials and schools, and it is particularly a problem in the latter. Parents do not understand that they can approach school officials to have questions answered or to discuss difficulties which their students may be having.

This respect for authority may also be fear or distrust of persons who seem to have high positions. Many immigrants are reluctant to use banking facilities. Many are also reluctant to report their incomes when such requirements are necessary to participate in programs which could help individuals further their educational goals or improve their job skills, regardless of their resident status.

Schools

Background:

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) is required by state law to educate all school-age children. It is prohibited by federal law from inquiring about legal status of parents. AACPS has had English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program in place for 30 years.

Current Status: As of December 31, 2008, the total number of students in ESOL program is 2,911. 1,428 are in elementary grades; 258 in middle school; 331 in high school. This is a 49% increase over last year. First Language Spoken at Home: Spanish--1,471 students; Korean--732; Vietnamese--612; Urdu--58; Arabic--54.

How ESOL Works:

Itinerant ESOL teachers serve elementary and middle schools. Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Meade, and Old Mill High Schools have "International Academies" for ESOL. Other high school students are bussed to and from these academies. All Language Learners get intensive English instruction approximately an hour per day and participate in regular classes with their peers the rest of the time.

A Drain on the Budget?

Not particularly. Extra busing is also provided for special academic programs. Various special needs programs are subsidized by federal government. (Some ESOL students also qualify for these, but not a disproportionate number.) No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides funds--based on enrollment--for multiple resources for ESOL teachers, professional development for general education teachers, and services to ESOL families.

Are There Other "Costs"—Low Achievement, Perhaps?

"Immigrant" students' achievement does not drag down their schools' overall ranking. Results of last year's High School Assessment test (for seniors): Asians outperformed Whites; Hispanics/Latinos outperformed African Americans. (Not all "foreign" students are newly arrived or necessarily in ESOL at the time of testing.) Third, fourth, and eighth grade ESOL students are attracting national attention with their reading proficiency. (Based on reports for all Maryland and all D.C. suburbs.)

Are We Getting Our Money's Worth?

Drop-out rates, 2007-2008: All AA County students---	3.27%
Hispanic students-----	2.46%
All ESOL students-----	1.72%
Graduation rates, 2007-2008: All students-----	89.14%
Hispanics/Latinos-----	75.11%
All ESOL students-----	53.62%

Note that those still in ESOL at the age of 16 probably arrived here as older children--possibly without previous schooling. Also, there is not much incentive for post-high school education as all state colleges and Anne Arundel Community College charge out-of-state tuition to all children of immigrant parents. One Hispanic graduate this year will attend the USNA.

Still to Be Accomplished:

AACPS feels need of more after school programs, academic tutorial, and enrichment services for elementary and middle school English Language Learners. It is striving to make all schools more culturally proficient. Has started a series of 10 forums (with Health Department and Social Services) to help bring school system, students, parents, and surrounding community together for mutual understanding and support.

Health Care

The only benefits for health care which are available to undocumented immigrants are *emergency medical services*, specifically obstetrical delivery and treatment until stabilization of life-threatening illness or injury.

Language and Health Care. Language is the highway to appropriate health care, since neither the patient nor the provider can reach the desired goal without fully comprehending each other's message. The Maryland Dept. of Human Resources (DHR) in 2007 served 1.7 million clients, 72.3% of whom spoke English. Of the remaining 27.7%, the majority (21%) were in a language group with less than 100 members! The next largest group of non-English speakers spoke Spanish (4%). The language barrier for Anne Arundel County (AAC) is less daunting. Of the 93,347 clients served in AAC by DHR in 2007, 93.6% spoke English. Of the remaining 7%, the largest group of non-English speakers spoke Spanish (4%).⁷

Maryland Children's Insurance Program (MCIP) which funds services to children includes a civil rights mandate on language; the agency must provide information clients can understand. The County Health Department (CHD) uses a "language line" contract to meet the language mandate of MCIP; does outreach to Hispanics and Koreans; provides a Hispanic health line (410-222-4499) and a Hispanic home page on the aa.county.org website (AASALUD.ORG). Children under 18 years of age are not allowed to translate for patients.

Public Sector. *All benefits require proof of either citizenship or legal status with residence within the US for a minimum of 5 years (3 years if married to a US citizen). Any child born in the US is automatically a citizen.* Various kinds of residency proofs are required.

The CHD provides services to preserve, protect, and extend health. Preventive care, not primary care, is provided: health information and health promotion, including such services as immunizations and screening for breast and cervical cancer.

CHD has partnerships with 27 communities, including working with 24 churches.

Hospital Care (Private Sector). Access to hospital care by immigrants is currently impossible to assess. Area hospitals consistently state that citizenship status is not elicited by any hospital staff. We do know that uncompensated care at Anne Arundel Medical Center (AAMC) has risen from \$3.03 million in 2006 to \$3.09 million in 2007, an increase of 2.1%. However, this rise could reflect a rise in poverty or among the uninsured. Legal and undocumented immigrants could be members of either or both of these groups.

Ambulatory Care. AAMC operates an Outreach Center in Annapolis which offers clinical services four days per week (Tues – Fri), for over 100 hours per month; nine medical specialties are accessible. All patients undergo financial screening, and pay what they can. From 2000-2003 patients seen increased from 1,400 to 3,125 (123%). All patients undergo financial screening, and pay what they can. From 2000 to 2003 patients seen increased 123% (from 1,400 to 3,125).⁸

The rise in pregnancy rate among immigrant teenage girls (age 14-15) is a major concern.

Spokespersons for both public and private sector health care agencies agree on the need for more out-patient services/clinics in the community. Patients should be able to pay on a sliding scale, but that is not easy to access. Hospitals are very expensive, and a less appropriate site for care aimed at prevention of illness, maintenance of health and management of chronic illness.⁹

⁷ From information provided to Myrna Siegel by Mark Millspaugh, Deputy Director, AAC Department of Social Services, on 29 October 2008.

⁸ From current brochure of the Annapolis Outreach Center, provided by its Director.

⁹ From Focus Group convened by the LWVAA Immigration Study Committee, Feb 5, 2009.

Social Services

Many people have a mistaken impression of the availability of government benefits to undocumented immigrants.

The County Department of Social Services administers four benefit programs:

- Temporary cash assistance
- Food stamps
- Medical assistance
- Temporary disability assistance
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To be eligible for any of the programs a person must be a U.S. citizen or a qualified legal immigrant.

TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE (formerly known as welfare) is not available to (1) immigrants in the U.S. illegally; (2) those who have no documentation of their status; (3) those whose documentation has expired; or (4) people who have student, work or tourist visas.

The Federal government requires an immigrant to be in eligible status for 5 years before benefits can be obtained. For people eligible under the rules, Maryland does not impose the 5-year waiting period, but pays benefits from State funds.

FOOD STAMPS Eligibility rules for food stamps are the same as for temporary cash assistance. Here also, Maryland does not require a 5-year waiting period. The Federal government does not impose the 5-year waiting period on children.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE Ineligible or illegal immigrants may only obtain emergency services, and may only get those if in the absence of treatment the person's health would be placed in serious jeopardy.

TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE is a Maryland program for adults who have applied for SSI (Supplemental Security Income). It is considered a loan program until SSI is received. This program is only available to U.S. citizens or legally admitted qualified immigrants.

Applicants for benefit programs must declare their citizenship status on their applications and sign under penalty of perjury.

TAXES AND BENEFITS

Few Issues in the debate over immigration reform are as controversial as the fiscal impacts of illegal immigrants on the communities where they live. The costs and benefits of immigrants have become a hot topic. Local costs carried by the public - education, health care, and social services – are frequently cited as unfair burdens. But the offsetting, sizeable contributions of immigrants to the economy and tax base are often underestimated or unseen.

After consulting the Anne Arundel Planning and Zoning Dept. and the state Comptroller about the economic impact of immigrants, we found that there is no report that answers questions about the overall costs to the county.

However, we did find a report for the Washington D.C. metropolitan area on immigrants' tax contributions (Community Foundation of the National Capital Area 2006). The report found that in the D.C. area as well as nationally, immigrants are predominantly a young working age group and – with the exception of some unauthorized immigrants – pay the same income and payroll taxes as native-born citizens. Very few are retired or collect pensions or Social Security although they pay those fees. Their unused Social Security payments are helping shore up the Social Security Fund for non-immigrants.

At the local level, immigrants pay several types of taxes that are important sources of revenue. Those who own homes pay state and local property taxes. Renters pay property taxes indirectly through their rent. Those who own cars pay automobile taxes. The report sums up all taxes paid by immigrants and natives at the federal level – Income, Medicare, and Social Security. And also those paid at the local level to District of Columbia, and most major suburban jurisdictions of MD and VA. Income, property, sales, automobile, tobacco, alcohol and utility taxes pay local costs in the metropolitan D.C. region.

The report found that in the metropolitan area, immigrant households in 1999-2000 paid nearly \$10 billion in taxes, or about 18 percent of all taxes paid by households in the region (\$55 billion) and that immigrants were about the same, 18 percent of the total population. Immigrant households in suburban Maryland contributed almost 8 percent of all household taxes collected by the state. Immigrant households paid a slightly lower share of their incomes in taxes (about 28 percent) than native households (31 percent) paid, in part because they have lower incomes.

Overall, however, the research suggests that immigrants are paying their own way, pay taxes roughly in proportion to their share of the population, and are not heavily subsidized by the native-born population.

CRIME and IMMIGRATION RAIDS

The Study Committee investigated three areas of crime in the county: (1) Hispanic street gangs. (2a) Hispanic criminals and (2b) victims. (3) Raids on Annapolis Painting Services in a 287(g) round-up of immigrants. We did not investigate undocumented immigrants as criminals, because they are not. They are undocumented, NOT criminals.

The 287(g) law, which allows county police to be deputized as an Immigration force, was designed to arrest and punish immigrant criminals. Frederick County Sheriff called the program “an overwhelming success.” CASA de MD, a major civil rights organization for Hispanics, said that more than half of the undocumented immigrants found in Frederick were stopped for driving without a license, and only 20 were charged with felonies.

(1) Police were asked about the extent of Hispanic gang activity. In Annapolis, four potential, not too developed, gangs, have been identified. Members range from ages 10 or 11 when they are recruited, to late 30s. Gangs came late to Anne Arundel; surrounding counties were beset far earlier. MS-13, a feared Salvadoran gang, has surfaced here recently.

(2a) In a policy begun last year, county police check the immigration status of arrested suspects. We do not have the record of county arrests, but other states and counties with the same policy typically report that 72 percent of federal Latino offenders were not US citizens (Pew Research Center study, released 2/18/09) Those arrests usually receive “relatively light sentences” and are deported after serving their sentences. In January, the New York Times reported that although federal prosecutions of immigration doubled in the last five years, other categories – gun trafficking, public corruption, organized crime, white-collar crime – declined. (2b) Immigrants are also victims of crime. For example, they do not understand how banks work here. They are afraid that if they put their money in a bank, the government will take it. Consequently they are regarded by criminals as walking cash machines. They also fall victims to high-priced loans. In 2006, 40 percent of loans to Hispanics were high-cost compared to 23 percent to whites (Nat’l Community Reinvestment Coalition).

(3) On June 30, 2008, the office of Annapolis Painting Services and 15 homes were raided by 75 officers from the federal Immigration & Customs Enforcement and 50 policemen from the county. They picked up 46 suspected undocumented workers. Units fanned out at 6 a.m. Doors in the homes were broken down and windows smashed. Most of those arrested have been deported. No criminal charges have been filed against the company owner (*The Capital* 12/28/08). Anne Arundel police were deputized as immigration agents under the 287(g) law. Montgomery County police chief told the House Committee on Homeland Security that the program damages important trust between authorities and immigrants (*Capital* 3/9/09).

What the raid also found was that Annapolis Painting Services was in gross violation of federal labor laws. Yet in March 2009, there still are no charges against the owner. He continues to live in one of his homes.

BUSINESS AND EMPLOYMENT

Hispanics became the country's largest minority in 2001. Over 21,000 Hispanics live in Anne Arundel County with nearly 4,000 living in Annapolis according to the most recent Census figures. Annapolis has been a magnet for these immigrants because of employment opportunities in our local hospitals, health care facilities and the hospitality industry, areas that employ large number of immigrants. Employment of these immigrants continues to be a source of confusion and misinformation. In an interview with an executive of the Anne Arundel Chamber of Commerce I was told that immigrants represent little or no threat to the local work force as they take the jobs that are the least desirable, pay the lowest wages and have few if any benefits. Examples cited were construction, landscaping, house cleaning, etc. Most work for minimum wage.

Local Annapolis companies are genuinely trying to comply with State regulations regarding the legal status of employees. The government's E-Verify system, which checks workers' information against Social Security and immigration-status databases, has a high error rate that will exclude legal workers and cannot detect the fraudulent uses of stolen Social Security numbers. Acceptable credentials may include foreign passports, drivers photo ID, social security cards, voters registration card, etc. For certain jobs a criminal and drug check are run, also a sex offender check. Workers are often exploited. Their distrust of authority extends to banks and workers will frequently carry large sums of cash on their person resulting in robberies. It was suggested that a possible solution to alleviate the current influx of illegals would be to revamp the guest worker program to allow more workers in legally and to take politics out of the equation. The recent raid on American Painting Services has increased the immigrant population's sense of isolation, distrust of police and has created a more hostile environment.

There are some success stories. In the City of Annapolis there are 17 Hispanic owned businesses including a Mini Mart on Main Street and the popular Mexican restaurant "El Toro Bravo" on West Street. In addition, there are 6 privately owned taxi cab businesses.

IMMIGRATION AND THE ECONOMY

Immigrants are here for jobs. Business and agriculture want them because there are too few home-grown workers for the work. The United States is a nation with an aging population. Its low birth rate is not replacing those in the workforce who retire. Until recently, the robust U.S. economy created more jobs than workers here could fill, with the result that half of the growth needed by the U.S. labor force in the 1990s came from new immigrants.

Immigrants brought with them high entrepreneurial ability as well. The number of Hispanic-owned businesses across the country has grown at three times the national average. The number in Annapolis – 17 companies, 6 taxi's, 1 mini market and 1 restaurant – as well as in the county, is described in the Fact Sheet, "Business and Employment."

Nevertheless, the arrival of Hispanic immigrants in the county is tied to fears. Our study of the impact on Anne Arundel cites some of these anxieties, but finds they are often overstated by residents who have the fears, but not the facts.

One fear is that immigrants cost the county more than they contribute. The evidence presented in the Fact Sheet, "Taxes and Benefits," shows that in Maryland's communities, suburban to D.C., their taxes do pay for local benefits. At the federal level, their taxes pay for Social Security benefits most of these young workers will never receive.

But tax revenue is not the same thing as economic benefit. The National Research Council published in 1997 what is generally viewed as the seminal study on the influence of immigration on the overall economy. It found that immigration has a positive benefit to the U.S. economy of about \$10 billion a year. Immigrant workers, it reported, have provided the strength that kept many corporations from locating overseas as have garment and shoe companies. It provided the intensive but low skilled labor needed by commercial farms.

The flow of immigrants provides the U.S. economy with a more flexible labor force that keeps industries growing while delivering lower prices to American consumers. On the other hand, a congressionally appointed Commission on Immigration Reform found that while the economy as a whole gains from immigration, the losers are native-born workers, less skilled and less educated.

In Anne Arundel, our finding is that Hispanic immigration is meeting labor market needs, particularly for low skilled work, and that the number of new businesses opened up has been beneficial. No one can predict, however, what the future will hold for immigrants in a failing economy.